

CONSTRUCTING ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION VARIABLES OF MALAY, CHINESE AND IBAN

ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to measure ethnic identification variables in a Malaysian context. Seven most widely accepted constructs of ethnic identity; language, friendship networks, religious affiliation, participation in clubs and organizations, endogamy, food preference and traditional celebrations were translated into nine constructs. Data collected was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis on three ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Iban in Malaysia. The findings indicate that 'my language' and 'my friends' can measure ethnic identification strength, with a caveat for religion for Malays.

Key Words: Ethnic, Ethnic Identification Strength, Malaysia, Malay, Chinese, Iban

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic marketing is enthusiastically promoted to cross-cultural marketers as the best method to obtain customers (Dunn, 1992; Mummert, 1995; Steere, 1995). Ethnicity is described as a dynamic and popular method of targeting (Armstrong, 1999; Cui, 1997; Fost, 1990; Kinra, 1997; Kumar, 2002; Livingston, 1992). However, this 'gung-ho' approach needs to be moderated by a better understanding of the very group that is targeted. The identification of ethnicity allows for the development of an in-group